1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

came a very powerful group of chiefs through whom the kingdom was administered. When these men went to their districts, sometimes they had precolonial ties in these areas as big lords—some of the constituent towns in the district were their former fiefs; sometimes however they were complete strangers to the area. Besides this there was a constant shuffling of different district heads through transfers, dismissals, retirements, and deaths. The various village area heads under each district head were chosen on the basis of investigations conducted by the British colonial officials to find out who among the population had the hereditary right to leadership for a particular local settlement and its satellite communities. Very often there was no tie of previous loyalty between the village area head and the new district head. Previously the problem had been solved by sending out a chima gana or junior lord who represented the fief-holder. He had lived in the fief and created a set of loyal local followers. At first district heads did the same things. They sent out their own representatives—now called chima—to run the village areas in their district for them. This practice was soon discovered by the British and as early as 1910 was declared illegal, although it continued on until well into the 1930s, and there are even some district heads today who admit they use chima to ensure control of their district. In Chapter 6 we will take up this problem again and examine it in more detail within the organization of the district.

The central government of the emirate has undergone a number of significant changes under colonialism. At first the Shehu collected taxes on settled peoples through the district heads and taxes on nomads through two trusted slave nobles. This proved unsatisfactory to the British who very early in the century changed the system so that each district head was responsible for tax collection on both settled and on nomad populations in his district. This weakened the power of the Shehu, but at the same time (*ca.* 1914) the British began enforcing among themselves the idea that they must deal with the Bornu government through the Shehu and his Council. Thus good or bad reports of the district heads or village area heads had to be officially put through the Shehu giving him a great deal of either protective or punitive power over his district and village chiefs.

After 1914 there was an increasing effort to create a working Council for the Shehu with a modern treasury from which local planning could be financed. Starting with only a few members it has grown slowly through the years to function as a cabinet with a Waziri or chief minister at its helm. Each councilor has a portfolio or Native Authority department, such as Education, Works, Agriculture, and so on, and these have central offices in the capital with representatives spread out in district capitals throughout Bornu. The experience in this twentieth-century emirate has produced Kanuri who now take part in regional and national politics so that men from Bornu sit in Kaduna, Lagos, London, and even at the United Nations in New York.

The movement of fief-holders out into the bush to administer districts produced a district capital where the ajia or district head resides. To this capital he brought his urban followers; and to the village as well came the district judge and his retinue. As the Native Authority departments developed, local representatives of the various civil service departments of the emirate government came out to the district capital as well. This makes the district capital a more complex and urbanized center and has forced the effects of such urbanization to spread widely

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

general, the Shehu must feel he has gained a loyal supporter and any suspicion to the contrary would bar an eligible contender from the position. The same applies in the case of members of the Shehu's council and especially its chairman, the Wazir. People say that would-be applicants give gifts, attempt to link themselves by marriage, and in general ingratiate themselves with the Shehu and his councilors who play the major part in such decisions; however such things are not easy to observe directly. On the other hand several people have told me that they regularly visit influential men in the city bringing gifts of cash and foodstuff and generally paying their respects to these men in the hopes that one day when a proper vacancy occurs, they will obtain the office of lawan. In other words this traditional mode of soliciting an appointment is admitted to for the office of lawan.

In the district capital the district head's house is always at the east end of the town plaza and is the most impressive compound in the village. The compound is regarded as emirate property and can only be used while the incumbent is in office after which time he must move out. In addition each district head has his own compound in the royal ward of Maiduguri in the capital with a residing chief subordinate (*wakil*) who appears at official state functions in the Shehu's court to represent his superior. In his rural area the district head has a large group of followers who live in his own compound and the surrounding vicinity. These men form a group of linked households under their leader, the chief follower of the district head who serves as his deputy in the latter's absence. In Magumeri a few of these followers have been recruited during their own lifetime, but most of them are the sons of men who have always been followers of this district head and his father before him.

At first glance these followers are indistinguishable from ordinary peasants except for the fact that some of them have expensive looking horses given to them by the district head. They help collect nomad cattle taxes, run messages for the district head, and never fail to ride in honor of their leader on special ceremonial occasions or when an important visitor has come to town. Most important they must be willing to leave town or move to another place whenever their superior is stationed elsewhere, while peasants are most often linked by social relations with a particular spot. These men have only one allegiance—that of subordination, discipline and respect to their superior, the district head. Thus they are never fully trusted by the more permanent local residents. Indeed younger members of the district head's following are often feared as well as mistrusted. They have no farms, no wives, and no households of their own. They talk, play cards, drink, look for amorous experiences in the local area, and are felt to be spies for the district head. When such men approach a group of peasant menfolk, the conversation suddenly stops, then slowly begins again on a note of pleasant but iridescent chit-chat in which nothing really serious or informative about local affairs is ever mentioned. Although the hierarchy of lawan and bullama under a district head is his official administrative organization in the district, his followers form an unofficial organization to execute his policies. Unlike the lawan and bullama they are totally dependent upon him for support and status in the society. In return they give him the prestige that comes from having a large retinue of followers. They also organize his tax collections, act as messengers, and sometimes they are even used to discipline lawans who are not complying with administration demands. Thus one lawan complained to a district head that he could not raise the tax assessment for his vil-

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

On the other hand the local official must work through the district head if he wishes to carry out his job successfully. Children are ordered into the district school through the district head's office. Forestry reserves are set up by his directive; cattle are rounded up by him. Indeed almost any action involving a response by the people in the district must come originally from the district head. A lawan, if approached for cooperation by civil service employees, would generally refuse to cooperate if he had not been first notified by the district head's office. The district head is a high official of the state while the native authority employee is generally the lowest status field representative of his department. Thus they pay the district head respect, stand up when he approaches them, take off their shoes before entering his compound, and consult him on programs they wish to have carried out in his district.

On his part the district head quickly establishes who the native authority officials are, and what families they come from or are connected to in the emirate. If the district head is closely connected by friendship and political alliance to a high-placed official in the local representative's department, then he may have an avenue of control over this local person through the latter's own superior. On the other hand the native authority employee may be connected with the powerful people in the emirate and the district head then knows that this particular official could possibly bring powerful forces into action if a situation warranted it.

The relationships of the district head to the capital are highly complex and result from the fact that he is the official link between the central government of the emirate and the local political organization of the district. Officially he is responsible to only one body, the central agency of the emirate government which is the Shehu-in-Council. This council, called the Bornu Native Authority Council, under the chairmanship of the Waziri or chief minister, is the highest authority in the emirate. As we noted in Chapter 2, the council acts like a cabinet and each member has a Native Authority department under his direction. District heads receive instructions about policy from the council and directives about programs from each of the departments. The district head delivers taxes to the Native Authority Treasury and must account for his actions to the council which has a major voice in appointing, dismissing, retiring, and transferring district heads from high to low-paying districts or vice versa.

Both during the colonial period and at the present, the Bornu Provincial Government has had several emirates under its jurisdiction, of which Bornu is the largest. Although not officially responsible to the Provincial Government, the district head and his work have always been inspected periodically by touring officers of the Provincial Government. These men can make recommendations which influence the emirate government and during colonial times there are a number of records of district heads being retired or dismissed because of the "advice" of Provincial Government officials. Thus the district head has to be sure his actions are in line with the demands and standards of provincial officials who are today generally from other parts of Northern Nigeria, and were, up to a few years ago, the British colonial officers.

The district head has other links with the capital as well. As we have already noted, he keeps a household in the palace ward of the capital city, and his followers in his compound under a wakil, or chief follower, visit the palace regu-

178 was. The changes noted above have made important inroads in
565 the social system. For many political appointments Western
[555] education has become a necessary requirement, and although many
[871] educated people still come from the aristocracy, commoners too
may become educated, may even excel in the schools and receive
jobs of political importance as a result of their scholastic ac-
[866] complishments. Along with modern education, election by direct
vote in the urban areas has allowed commoners to move directly
into politics, as members of the House of Assembly in Kaduna.
This has been of little significance until very recently, but
it represents a mechanism disruptive of the traditional social
system. Lastly, the newly risen wealthy class, of non-aristo-
cratic origin, has been able to take over, in some small measure,
characteristics of the aristocracy through the use of their
[556] wealth. Since they are able to afford to make the pilgrimage,
they benefit from the prestige accruing from being an Alhaji.
[662] They also benefit directly from giving money to political parties
and thereby gain political power.

178 The opening up of new avenues toward wealth, prestige, and
554 political power, the characteristics of the old aristocracy,
565 has resulted in an increasing number of individuals of commoner
family who have been able to achieve these goals. In recent
years such individuals have been rewarded by having important
[645] titles conferred on them by the Shehu. Members of the Shehu's
Council who did not come from aristocratic families have been
[431] granted noble titles. This process has been furthered by the

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692 whose appeals could be made to the high court in the capital. The keeper
693 of the records or scribe of the high court, the Talba was considered the
[645] third most important person in the kingdom. It is said that this high court plus its scribe served as a council to the king in the affairs of state because of its members' knowledge in matters of law and religion.

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643 When the Birni dynasty fell in the 19th century, Shehu Laminu served as the highest judge in the land, thus bringing political and judicial functions even more closely together in the state. He kept the idea of an appeal court and local courts but did much of the high court adjud-
[631] ication himself. The relation of the temporal judiciary and its religious practitioners is illustrated by a European traveller's account in the 1820's,(1) who records that local judges' decisions could be reversed by the high court or the local political resident.

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463 The presence of a large upper class and a royal court with its patterns of specialized consumption, the uneven distribution of intensive cropping and craft production localities, the contacts with North Africa and to a lesser extent the western Sudan, for the last 1000 years, have all acted as conditions supporting the differentiation of labour in
[44] Bornu. This has produced the idea and the physical reality of the market.

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439 Trade has been a well organized aspect of the society for centuries. A complex system of distribution and production through the market was observed by the first travellers in the area. Grain was dispatched to Bilma up in the desert in return for salt. This trade so tied the people of Bilma to Bornu that even today when the trade has been much reduced, they still feel themselves very closely allied to the Kanuri. Natron from Lake Chad was taken to Kano and from there traded all over coastal West Africa.

(1) Denham, D. and Clapperton, H. op. cit. p.23

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out of a very highly taxed District.(1) The net result was a high turn over in chiefs both at the District and village level, through the utilisation by the British of their powers of deposition of chiefs, and a continuation of Kanuri rather than British concepts of taxation.

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In 1914, a new Resident took over the province and began to strengthen the Emirate political structure at its center.(2) He instituted a Shehu's council with a Wasiri as its head, and issued instructions that no European officer was to give direct instructions to District Heads. All directives were to be made through the Shehu and his council. This council, starting originally with two members, grew steadily in size and function. By the late 1940's it resembled a kind of local cabinet with the Wasiri as its head under the titular headship of the Shehu and with each member having at least one portfolio. That is to say, the members of this Council have come more and more to function as the heads of civil service departments.

All African political organisation, both traditional and introduced, was called the Native Administration by Lugard and his followers and the Emirate departments of works, forestry, education, veterinary services, etc., were dubbed the N.A. departments, for that particular Emirate. This distinguished them from the government provincial departments who administered and guided the policies and actions of all the N.A.'s in the province.

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The newly introduced European governmental services demanded some degree of western education and trained clerks from other parts of Nigeria were brought into Borno to fill the host of small jobs which were necessary to a growing administration.

(1) In the Mobber, Geidam, Magumeri and Nganzai District Notebooks, notations have been made throughout the colonial period of complaints by peasants who reported that they had moved from one district to another because of excessive taxation.

(2) In 1914, the British swiftly and with little opposition took over the German Cameroons, half of which were ceded to them after the War.

643 lower rank, that the Shehu had a good deal to say in the appointment of new DH's, and could operate as a bulwark to protect office holders whose connection to the palace and/or Bornu tradition made them feel some reliance on the monarch's protection.

643 648 [114] That this interpretation is open to the charge of ethnocentricism the writer is keenly aware, for it is the avowed British policy to create in Bornu a constitutional monarchy of the English variety, while making the Waziri and the rest of the Council the effective administration of the state. Thus the interpretation is in line with European policy. Perhaps the power situation only looks this way and is in [829] reality quite different. This much can be said: high placed Bornu officials agreed with this trend and for rational reasons. They argued that the state functions were becoming extremely complicated, and that only trained, worldly men, who understood not only Bornu, but Bornu in relation to Nigeria, could adequately do the job. The British, however, are inconsistent in their policy, for they feel very strongly about having somebody who can speak English as the next Shehu, while the Kanuri leaders want a particular well loved older man who is known for his view of the monarchy as a ceremonial rather than an authoritative role. If the present Shehu dies (he is 85) before the British leave, the Kanuri may find themselves with a younger, more ambitious Shehu, who will attempt to affect the running of the state. (1)

645 647 Bornu Emirate besides having traditional chiefs also has the formal structure of a western civil service. Under the Shehu's Councillors are the various N.A. departments. Under the chairmanship of the Waziri, each Councillor is responsible for one of the N.A. departments whose titles - forestry, sanitation, agriculture, education, public

(1) The British have the power of veto on appointments, so that although the Kanuri may put up names, the British can, by using this

[Footnote continues on p. 258]

645 works, etc., - are distinctly western. The Councillors work under the
647 advice of the Provincial Government Department, i.e. the Colonial gov-
[631] ernment, whose top personnel are Europeans.

647 The personnel in the N.A. departments form what has come to
571 be called a new class in the society - the new mallams. They wear wrist watches, read vernacular newspapers, listen avidly to the radio, go to political meetings, join civil service associations, and think of themselves as urban, even when they are stationed in the bush. For the most part they have obtained their jobs as a result of some exposure to western education. The separateness of this "class" from the traditional society is often claimed by British officials some of whom see in this group the foundation of a new ruling elite whose membership will be
[555] based on western education and outlook. That western education is a new means of upward mobility is undeniable, but the separateness of the new mallams in the N.A. departments from their traditional society and its values is open to doubt. This point can be illustrated by looking at some of the informal rather than formal rules of behaviour operating in the N.A.

647 Recruitment into the N.A. can be by application to the Shehu's Council or the relevant Department, in writing. No informants in
[873] the N.A. had heard of this method ever being used. Another way of recruiting personnel is to obtain the new civil servants from among the Secondary School boys of Maiduguri. Teachers in the Secondary School
[557] remark that this method is being used more often as time goes on. However, the most often utilized method of recruitment to the N.A. is a

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643 power, make the final decision if they wish. Stalemates are settled by
648 the Governor of the Northern Region. The Resident officer of Bornu was adamant in his opposition to the Kanuri's own choice for Shehu-elect in his conversations with the writer on this topic.